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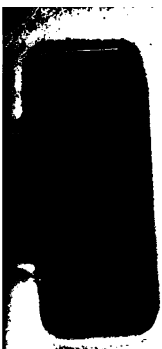
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ON THE ROCKS.

A SHORT CRUISE

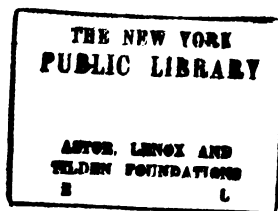
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A SHORT CRUISE.

CHAPTER I.

CAPTAIN HIRAM.

To a stranger who walked through the single street of Oldhaven shortly after noon on a certain day in August last past, it would have seemed as if the village was entirely deserted.

The fishing-fleet had left the harbor the day previous, and since every male inhabitant between the ages of ten and sixty was a member of the fleet, there were none to represent the settlement, save the mothers and children; for as the girls grew toward womanhood they turned their backs on the cluster of weather-beaten houses, to become "mill-hands" in the noisy factories a dozen miles inland.

It was on the shore of the harbor that the children usually played; but on this day they had deserted it, and for two reasons: The first and most important being that Captain Hiram

Stubbs, owner of the sloop *Island Queen*, a man whose gruff voice and apparently harsh manner prevented him from being a favorite with the younger portion of the population, was cleaning the bottom of his tiny vessel as she lay heeled upon the sand, and the young people were not at all eager to listen to the lectures or advice which he was inclined to bestow upon them at every convenient opportunity, therefore they left him severely alone.

The second reason for this change of playground was that two strangers—summer boarders—had arrived at Oldhaven the evening previous, and apparently had evinced no disposition to become acquainted with the children of the village.

Ellen Seabury, an unusually small girl, who often spoke with pride of the fact that she was twelve years of age, and her brother Thomas, one year her junior, were the new-comers.

Not being acquainted with Captain Hiram Stubbs; and therefore unaware that the children of the village did not consider him a desirable companion, Ellen and Tom went out on this particular day to make an independent exploration of Oldhaven and vicinity, accompanied by a chubby little youngster about three years

old, who had, immediately she appeared on the street, claimed acquaintance with the matronly looking, tiny girl.

"Hello, my hearties!" Captain Hiram cried in a boisterous tone that sounded to Ellen very much like a gust of wind. "So you're the summer boarders what have come down to Old-haven for a quiet time, eh? Well, I allow you'll get it here, for this is the quietest spot to be found on the coast. What did you say your name was?"

"I didn't say, sir," Ellen replied timidly; and Tom, instead of attempting to assist in this beginning of a conversation, began to clamber up the smooth side of the Island Queen as she lay heeled over on the yellow sand.

"Come down out of that, youngster!" Captain Hiram shouted as if in anger. "Do you allow I paint that 'ere craft jest for the purpose of havin' you scratch her with your boot-heels?"

"There ain't any heels on these boots; an' s'posin' there was, how could I scratch her with my toes?"

"That's somethin' I ain't goin' to take the trouble to explain, 'cause I don't know how it's done; yet it seems to me as if a boy couldn't

come within a dozen fathoms of a piece of fresh paint without scratchin' it to death. Now, if it so be you want to set here in the shade of the Island Queen, an' I allow she's the trimmest craft that sails out of Oldhaven, why I'm willin'; but if it's a case of your goin' over the rail as you're tryin' to do now, you an' me will have trouble."

"I don't think Thomas means to do any harm, sir," Ellen said apologetically; "but you know boys always do want to be climbing around. Sometimes I think Thomas Hardy Seabury will break his neck in spite of all I can do, he does climb so much."

"There's no fear of that, Miss. A boy is jest like a monkey. If he tumbles he'll come down on his feet, an' the most harm he'll likely do himself is to scratch his nose. So your name's Seabury, is it?"

"Yes, sir. I am Ellen Seabury, and this is Thomas Hardy Seabury. Who that baby is I don't know."

"Well, I do. It's 'Siah Jones's youngster. Where'd you pick him up?"

"He was on the street when we came out of the house. Perhaps you don't know it, sir, but we are boarding at Mrs. Littlefield's."

"Indeed I do, Miss; an' if there's a man, woman, or child in this 'ere town what didn't know Maria Littlefield was goin' to have summer boarders, it's 'cause he wasn't in this county to hear her talk. That woman is the powerfulest talker 'twixt here an' Seguin Light. Didn't it ever strike you that way?"

"We only came last night, sir, and I didn't see Mrs. Littlefield till this morning."

"There's no need of your seein' her so long's you're within sound of her tongue; an' I allow you'll know more'n I can tell you before a week goes over your head. So your name's Ellen, is it?"

"Yes, sir; but mother and Thomas Hardy call me Nell."

"Well, that's where your mother an' Thomas Hardy are off their soundin's. Ellen is a good Christian name, though I don't know as I ever run across it in the Bible; but it's right up an' above board for all that. My mother's name was Ellen, an' I allers allowed there wasn't any better ever invented."

"Did you have a mother?" Thomas Hardy asked in surprise, forgetting for a moment his desire to clamber over the side of the Island Queen.

"I s'pose you think I'm too old for anything of that kind, eh?" and Captain Hiram twisted the tuft of hair on his chin as if it was his desire to appear particularly fierce.

"Thomas Hardy doesn't mean anything wrong, sir," Ellen said mildly; and the old man's face suddenly lost its expression of ferocity. "But it does seem odd that a man so old could have had a mother."

"I reckon you don't allow I ever was young, eh? Well I was, though I guess I had more size to me than you've got. How old might you be?"

"Twelve years, sir."

"What?" and, with his hands resting on his knees, Captain Hiram leaned over that he might the better peer into the child's face.

"I know I'm small, sir; but Thomas Hardy does the growing for the family, mother says. He's only eleven; but then he's a boy, and has got a middle name."

"What does the middle name have to do with your growin', child?"

"I don't know, sir; but it has always seemed to me that children who had them were bigger than any others, and I feel almost certain I should have grown faster if I had been named

properly. Do you know what they call the baby, sir?"

"Yes; an' 'cordin' to your way of figgerin' he's fixed about right to get along in this 'ere world, 'cause he's named Samuel Abner Jones; an' if that ain't a combination to go with Jones, then I'm a shark. *Now* what's that boy of yourn up to?"

Ellen looked around in alarm, and not seeing her brother, called shrilly,—

"Thomas Hardy! Thomas Hardy Seabury!"

"Oh, what's the matter with you, Nell? Can't you let a fellow alone?"

"Where are you?"

"I'm 'round this side of the vessel; an' she's tipped way over so I can get up on deck, if you'll come an' give me a boost."

"I'll boost you right out of your boots, you young scapegrace, if you go foolin' 'round this 'ere sloop! Now what do you want?"

"I want to go on deck."

"Well, you can't. Come here this minute!"

"Yes, Thomas Hardy, please come," Ellen added; and Master Seabury finally made his appearance, although it is doubtful if he would have done so save for the fact that Captain Hiram was so near at hand.

"Why ain't you off with the rest of the youngsters?" the old man asked sternly.

"'Cause I couldn't find them. I didn't see anything but girls last night, and this morning I can't find even them."

"The boys of Oldhaven are obliged to earn their livin' about as soon as they can walk, an' I reckon the bulk of 'em are out with the fleet. If they hadn't been I wouldn't dared pull the Island Queen out of water, fearin' they might have tore her to pieces; for the boys of this 'ere village are the bane of my life."

"Do you mean, sir, that boys as small as Thomas Hardy really go to sea?"

"Well, I was jest risin' seven when I started, an' you can see whether that kind of a life has spiled me or not."

"I don't think I should take a minute's peace if Thomas Hardy went away in a big vessel."

"I reckon it would be pretty nigh as easy for you as it would for him, unless he got over the habit of sticking his nose in where it don't belong. It would do him a power of good."

"Say, why don't you give me a chance to see what it's like?" Thomas asked boldly.

"What do you mean now?"

"You go out fishing, don't you?"

"I do when there's any great call for it; but my fishin' days are about over, an' I'm gettin' to hug the shore pretty considerable."

"Then what have you got this vessel for?"

"She does to cruise 'round in now an' then. If I didn't own her I'd be mighty lonesome, seein's how I've lived on salt water the most of my life. But I'm a leetle more fore-handed than some of my neighbors, an' can afford to do what pleases me."

"When are you going out again?"

"Would you like to take a sail, little Ellen?" and the old man laid his big, brown hand almost tenderly on the tiny shoulder.

"Indeed I would, sir; if it was safe."

"Safe? The Lord love you, child, it's safer at sea than it is on shore. If it so be you want to go, why say the word, an' Cap'en Hiram is the skipper for you to sail under."

"I shouldn't like to put you to any trouble, sir."

"Yes, that's jest the way with girls!" Thomas Hardy interrupted. "They talk soft like that, when all the time they're most dyin' to go. Say, Captain Hiram, you wouldn't take her an' leave me on the land, would you?"

"I s'pose I'd have to put up with you for the sake of havin' little Ellen along."

"Then why don't you start? She wants to go."

The old man leaned over the child, who was caressing the not over-cleanly baby, and must have seen in her face that Thomas Hardy had spoken the truth, for he said quickly, —

"I allow the tide'll be up so we can get the Island Queen afloat in a couple of hours; an' if it so be that you want to go, little Ellen, run up an' ask your mother. Tell her Cap'en Hiram Stubbs has given you the *invite*, an' he'll be proud to have the company of a quiet little woman like you."

"Do you think it will be safe if I leave the baby here with you and Thomas Hardy while I go to Mrs. Littlefield's, sir?"

"Well, I ain't sayin' anything for Thomas Hardy; but it don't strike me that it'll be any ways pleasant to leave that Jones youngster with me, 'cause I never did get along with boys, no how."

"I'll go for you, Nell," Thomas Hardy said quickly. "It would take you an hour to go there and back, 'cause you'd have to fuss over mother half a day if you got where she was;" and without waiting to learn whether his proposition was acceptable, Master Seabury hurried off more quickly than he would have done had

he been bent on a mission the result of which in nowise affected him.

"I reckon we can trust him to find out what we want to know, seein's how he wants a sail worse'n you do; an' we'll set here in the shade till he gets back, little Ellen. It'll be quite a spell before the tide serves; an' then, if that 'ere fog-bank don't come down on us, I'll show you what the Island Queen can do when she tries."

"Do you dare to go very far in such a small vessel, sir?"

"The Lord love you, child, I'd be willin' to go anywhere in her. She's safer than many a bigger craft, an' knows me as I do her."

During this time Samuel Abner Jones had contrived to content himself by unwinding and re-winding the moist, tiny curls of paint which Captain Hiram had scraped from the bottom of the Island Queen, and in so doing had smeared his face and hands until he looked really like a freak of nature, rather than the offspring of respectable parents.

Now, however, it was as if he had determined to make himself the central figure in the scene; for he started toward the incoming waves as fast as his little bowed legs would carry him, much to the alarm of Ellen, who ran after him with no slight show of motherly solicitude.

"You are wastin' good genuine sympathy, little Ellen, for it ain't deserved," Captain Hiram said, as a twinkle came into the eyes which were nearly hidden from view by the over-hanging, bushy eyebrows. "There is never a Jones in these 'ere parts as would suffer from goin' too near the water, an' sometimes I believe they are more afraid of it in a wash-basin than when it's spread out as it is here in the harbor."

"But he might get drowned, Captain Hiram, if he was allowed to go so near the sea alone."

"Not a bit of it, little Ellen. The natural aversion of the Joneses to water would prevent him from goin' too far, an' you needn't consider it your bounden duty to keep track of him all the while you stay in Oldhaven. You are a motherly sort of a body by nature, an' I allow you'll allers be lookin' after somethin' or somebody as long as you live."

"It is better to be of service in the world, Captain Hiram, even though one is small, than to selfishly think only of one's own amusement."

"Right you are, an' this 'ere would be a better world if everybody should take up your way of thinkin'. Do you know, little Ellen—it seems foolish I'll admit, but I can't help thinkin' of

you an' my old mother in the same breath. She, Lord love her soul, was the same careful kind of a body regardin' other people that you give promise of bein', an' a better woman never trod in shoe-leather. If it so be that all the angels are like her, heaven must be a mighty pleasant place for a careless man like me."

"Is your mother an angel, Captain Hiram?" Ellen asked in a whisper, and totally unmindful of the fact that Samuel Abner was once more dangerously near the water's edge.

"There ain't the least shadow of a doubt of it in my mind, little Ellen; for even though it should happen there was too many angels in heaven, the Lord couldn't miss the chance of gettin' another like her; an', bless you child, she'll pick up somethin' to do for other people even there."

"Has she been dead long, Captain Hiram?"

"It seems so to me, little Ellen, though it's only a year an' two months since the big white angels come for her. While she was alive there was no man in Oldhaven, or anywhere else in this wide world for that matter, what had a cheerfuller home than this same Cap'en Hiram Stubbs; an' now I allow there's mighty few with a more desolate one."

"Didn't you ever have a wife?"

"Why, Lord love you, child, what was the need of it while my mother was livin'? I never could hope to find the equal of her; an' it wouldn't have seemed right to bring another woman in to take her place, so to speak."

The expression on Ellen's face told of her sympathy, but before she could give it words Samuel Abner demanded her immediate attention.

Despite the antipathy of the Jones family for water, he had strayed into the line of gentle surf until the tiny waves were curling around his little bowed legs; and Ellen, not daring to venture in after him, ran to the very edge of the thin line of foam, where she stood begging the venture-some Samuel Abner to return, looking not unlike a motherly hen who, by an unfortunate combination of circumstances, has brought forth a brood of ducklings.

"Hold hard, little Ellen. I'll bring him ashore for you, though I never thought I'd raise a hand to take a Jones from the water."

And Captain Hiram plucked Samuel Abner from the seeming danger, depositing him high upon the gleaming sands with an admonitory shake which did not disturb the youngster in the slightest, although to Ellen it seemed unnecessarily harsh.

“Please don’t hurt him, Captain Hiram!” she cried solicitously. “He is too young to know he ought not go in the sea, and I’ll take good care he don’t do it again while he’s with me.”

Captain Stubbs looked furtively around an instant to assure himself there was no one in sight; and then, leaning over, quickly kissed the tiny girl on the cheek, straightening himself up an instant later as if ashamed of such a display of affectionate weakness.

“I couldn’t help it, little one,” he said apologetically.

“Oh, I didn’t mind it, sir, in the least; and I’ll kiss you, if you’ll let me.”

“If I’ll let you, little Ellen? Why, I’ll thank you for it;” and the old man rubbed his face vigorously with the sleeve of his shirt, after which he stooped down until his head was on a level with Ellen’s.

Putting one arm around his neck almost caressingly, she gave him as tender a kiss as she might have given Samuel Abner; and there was a suspicious moisture in the old man’s eyes as he raised himself slowly, placing his hand reverentially upon the brown curls as he said solemnly, —

“May the Lord love, and keep trouble far from you, little Ellen!”

"Thank you, sir."

A shrill voice from the other side of the Island Queen caused Captain Hiram to start almost guiltily, as Thomas Hardy shouted at the full strength of his lungs, —

"Mother is willing, if Captain Stubbs really wants us to go; and Miss Littlefield says she wonders what's come over that old curmudgeon, 'cause he never asked anybody out sailing before. What's a curmudgeon, Captain Hiram?"

"I reckon the kind Maria Littlefield means will come pretty nigh answerin' to my description," the old man replied grimly. "It's little Ellen I asked to go out sailin'; an' if it so be that you make one of the party, it's because of her *invite*, not mine."

"Of course I'll go if she does, else who'd take care of her? Girls ain't fit to go anywhere alone."

"I allow it's this one that does most of the carin' in your family, young man."

"It don't make any difference who it is, so long as I'm goin' out in this vessel," Master Seabury replied carelessly, and Ellen said, —

"I must take the baby home before we start, of course. Will you tell me where he lives, Captain Hiram?"

“It’s a long bit up the street, my child, an’ there’s no need of your goin’ so far on account of him. I ain’t over an’ above favorable to babies; but you shall keep this one with you, even if he is a Jones.”

“But his mother will be terribly worried if he doesn’t come back soon.”

“I’ll answer for that part of it. So long as he is out of the way she won’t turn a hair. Now then, my hearties, sit right down here while I get the Island Queen ready, for the tide is creepin’ up on us jest as surely as is death.”

CHAPTER II.

AFLOAT.

THOMAS HARDY would have assisted in the preparations for getting under way, but that the old man positively refused to accept of his services.

"You're to sit right down there, an' do jest as little Ellen tells you, for once in your life, young man," Captain Hiram said with his customary assumption of sternness; "an' if you vex her in any way there'll be no sailin' for you this day, leastways, not on the Island Queen. There's mighty few boys got sich a sister as you have, Thomas Hardy, an' it's a pity you don't appreciate her better."

"What do you know 'bout how I appreciate her?"

"You couldn't come anywhere nigh doin' justice to the subject, however hard you might try; so it won't do any harm to keep remindin' you of your good fortune."

Then Captain Hiram set about making his

preparations for the floating of the sloop; and Thomas Hardy remained quietly near his sister's side, lest by some careless word or movement he might deprive himself of this golden opportunity.

"The Island Queen ain't what you might call fit for sea, by any manner of means," Captain Hiram said as he continued his work; "an' I allow she wouldn't have left the harbor to-day, nor to-morrow either, if it hadn't been that little Ellen wanted to go. But even though she ain't as trim as might be wished, she'll do her duty as she always has, which is more'n can be said of some folks I know."

"Have we got to wait for that water to come all the way up here?" Thomas Hardy asked after what seemed to him a very long time of silence.

"It's the only thing to be done, if you want to take a spin in the sloop, lad; an' the longer you live the better you'll know that patient waitin', with a little work thrown in now an' then to kinder help Providence along, is the best way to get what you're wantin'. No good ever comes of tryin' to force matters. It's jest like this 'ere sloop. Set your shoulder under her stem, an' see how much you can make towards pushin' her into the water; but wait a bit, an' the tide'll come creepin' up, creepin' up, till it raises her keel off

the sand, an' the job is done without any work, or any frettin' either, if it so be you're disposed to take things as you oughter. I wonder what the folks in Oldhaven will say when they hear that Cap'en Hiram Stubbs took one of them 'ere Jones babies out for a sail? Why, they'll come to the conclusion that he's way off his reckonin'. Look out for the youngster, little Ellen, or I'll have to go into the surf after him. agin. It beats all how he's hankerin' for water this day! It's an unnatural desire on the part of any Jones I ever heard about."

Captain Hiram's preparations were made by the time the tide had crept nearly to the stern-post of the Island Queen; and Ellen was on the point of moving farther inland, when the old man suddenly lifted her as if she had been a thistle-down, depositing her in the cockpit of the stranded vessel.

"Don't be afraid, little one; I'm only puttin' you out of the tide's reach, 'cause we've got quite a spell to wait yet, an' the sloop will float about as soon with us on board as if we hung 'round the shore. Here's the small Jones," he added, passing Samuel Abner up much as if the baby had been a bundle of merchandise. "Look out for him, an' I'll see to your brother" —

"I reckon I can 'tend to myself," Master Seabury interrupted as he eluded the old man's grasp, and began clambering unaided up the deck. "I wouldn't be much of a fellow if I couldn't get aboard of a little vessel like this."

The words had hardly been spoken before Thomas Hardy's feet slipped on the smooth planking, and he rolled with many a disagreeable bump completely over the rail onto the sand, striking with such force as called forth a little squeak of pain.

"O Thomas Hardy! Thomas Hardy Seabury! Now you *have* hurt yourself!"

"Of course I have," was the petulant reply. "Don't you s'pose it would hurt any fellow to tumble off an old vessel like that?" and Master Seabury, rising slowly, cast a look of reproach at the little sloop.

"There ain't any call for you to find fault with the Island Queen, my lad, 'cause she wasn't in no way to blame. Experience is what's needed in this world, even when it comes to gettin' aboard of a sloop as small as this one; an' when you ain't willin' to learn from them as knows more'n you do, you must expect rough handlin' now an' then. A sailorman don't flounder 'round in that fashion when the deck is on an angle, but he goes over

the rail in this shape ;” and Captain Hiram gave an exhibition of agility as he vaulted up the steep incline.

“ Are you hurt, Thomas Hardy ? ” Ellen cried again.

“ Didn’t I tell you I was ? ”

“ What can I do for you ? ”

“ Stay where you are and leave me alone. It seems as if you and Captain Hiram thought I couldn’t do anything.”

“ Let him have his own way, little Ellen ; an’ if he gets a rough knock now an’ then it won’t do any harm, ’cause I allow he’s one of them as will steer his own course till he’s brought up with a round turn sich as will make him willin’ to listen to others.”

Then Captain Hiram gave his entire attention to making Ellen and the Jones baby more comfortable, while Thomas Hardy was left to clamber on board in such fashion as best pleased him.

Not until after two attempts did he succeed ; and then it was to seat himself in a sulky fashion as far from his companions as possible, where he assumed the position and bearing of a much-abused boy.

With a firm hold of Samuel Abner’s dress, lest he should precipitate himself over the side, Ellen

watched the incoming tide as, with many a gurgle and ripple of delight, it ran in and out among the hollows formed by the keel of the sloop, each moment growing stronger and stronger, until the yellow sands were hidden from view, and the Island Queen, yielding to the influence of her liquid cradle, swayed gently to and fro, gradually assuming an upright position.

Thomas Hardy lost his expression of ill-temper when it was possible to move about comfortably, and would have begun a thorough exploration of the sloop, much to Ellen's fear, but for Captain Hiram's emphatic command to "remain quiet an' behave himself."

"You're terribly 'fraid I'll hurt your vessel," Master Seabury said petulantly; but at the same time obeying the command lest he should be sent ashore before the voyage was begun.

"I don't allow you'd do the Island Queen much harm beyond scrapin' the paint; but them monkey-shines fret your sister, an' that's somethin' I sha'n't allow while I'm 'round. Then, agin, there's more'n even chances you'll go overboard at the rate you're cavortin' 'round; an' while I don't reckon there'd be any great danger in it, you'd get a duckin' that would obleege you to go to Maria Littlefield's for dry clothes, which would put an

end to this cruise so far as you're concerned. As I look at it, it's to your advantage to behave; for I give you fair warnin' that little Ellen ain't to be cheated out of her voyage, no matter what happens to you."

"Thomas doesn't mean to be rude, sir. It is only his way."

"An' I reckon we've all of us got a right to our way; but we musn't grumble when we find that that way leads us into trouble. If it so be Thomas Hardy's willin' to take the chances of goin' back to Maria Littlefield's while we cruise 'round outside, I sha'n't say anything to whatever he does, pervidin' it don't fret you, little Ellen; but when it comes to that, I put my foot right down. The Island Queen is leavin' the sand now, an' I reckon we'll set the jib to slew her nose 'round. Now then, Thomas Hardy, lay hold of this rope if you want to be useful, an' in five minutes more we'll have deep water under the keel."

Master Seabury willingly acted upon this suggestion; and a low cry of delight burst from Ellen's lips as the sloop gradually swung away from the land, rising and falling upon the gentle swell as if courtesying to her partner, the wind.

The mainsail was run up after little Ellen and

the Jones baby had taken possession of the tiny cuddy which served as cabin, lest the slatting of the boom might work them some injury, and the cruise was begun.

"Now you can come out here an' sit down," the old man said when the Island Queen was headed directly away from Oldhaven, leaving a track of milky white behind her; "an' Thomās Hardy shall take a lesson in steerin', if it so pleases him."

It did so please Master Seabury; and never was a boy prouder than he, when, profiting by Captain Hiram's brief lesson, he was able to hold the sloop steadily on her course.

There came to him a sense of triumph at thus being able to direct her movements, and he fondly believed he was already an experienced sailor.

Samuel Abner danced and crowed in very glee as the sloop rose and fell on the waves; and little Ellen had quite as much as she could do to prevent him from going over the rail, until Captain Hiram "belayed" him to the cuddy door by a rope fastened around his waist.

"Now you can let him cavort to his heart's content, for I allow he won't break loose from his moorin's. Keep her steady as she goes, lad, an' don't let her yaw so much. There! Bring her

up gently. Pushin' the tiller hard down when you want to swing her 'round a single point is a good bit like losin' your temper; you're bound to go too far in the opposite direction. A steady hand an' a gentle one is what a boat needs, an' it's the same as we all oughter have over ourselves."

"Seems to me I'm keepin' her straight enough."

"So you are, lad, if you're satisfied with a zig-zag course like that," and the old man pointed to the creamy track behind. "But anything that's worth doin' at all is worth doin' well, an' you never ought to be satisfied till you've done the best."

"I didn't come out here to be preached at."

"Why, Thomas Hardy! How can you say such a rude thing, when Captain Hiram is doing so much to give us a good time?"

"I don't care! He talks jest as if I was a baby! He thinks you're awful nice; but he oughter see you sometimes!"

"I allow you're fully as much of a baby as young Jones here," Captain Hiram said with no trace of ill humor; "an' if it so be you're willin' to act as sich, why I won't say a word agin it. He don't know any better, an' for that reason we overlook his cavortin's, an' we will yours

on the same ground. Now then, little Ellen, where is it your pleasure to go? What part of this coast do you want to see?"

"Wherever you choose, Captain Hiram. It is just as pleasant as can be anywhere."

"I allow then we'll strike a straight course for Dollar Island. That's much as we're headin', Thomas Hardy. We'll take a fair wind out an' tack back."

"Are you going to land there?" Ellen asked.

"If it so be you please, child. This cruise is for your pleasure, an' you're the skipper. I allow a bit of grub wouldn't go bad, so keep your eye on Thomas Hardy while I overhaul the stores in the cuddy."

There was a swinging-table in the tiny cabin, and Captain Hiram devoted an unusual amount of labor in arranging upon it the most tempting of his stores in honor of the one particular guest whom he wished to please; while she literally obeyed his commands, hardly raising her eyes from the helmsman, who, becoming impatient because of the scrutiny, said petulantly,—

"Now what's the matter with you, Nell? Anybody'd think you was a reg'lar sailor by the way you watch me. Don't you s'pose I know what oughter be done?"

"You never was in a vessel before, Thomas Hardy, and here you are steering one."

"Well, s'posen I am? Ain't I doin' it right? S'posen I wasn't; how'd you know anything about it?"

"Captain Hiram says that milky track behind us ought to be straight, and I am sure it is crooked enough now."

"Well, Captain Hiram says a good many things there's no need of. It's straight enough for me. Perhaps I want it crooked."

"Don't talk like that, Thomas Hardy, when the captain has been so good as to sail his vessel out here simply for our pleasure."

"Oh that's all in your eye, Nell. He never would have come here just for us. Most likely he wants to go to Dollar Island on some business, and makes us think he's doing it to give us a good time."

Ellen motioned toward the cabin to intimate that their host might overhear the rude remark; but Thomas Hardy was not disturbed by such a possibility.

"I'll show him before we get home how much I know about boats. He ain't the only man in this world that can do things."

Ellen remained silent, understanding that by

continuing what was really becoming an argument, Captain Hiram might hear something which would displease him, and Thomas Hardy held the tiller, triumphant and happy in his ignorance.

It was nearly half an hour before the owner of the *Island Queen* had the lunch arranged to his entire satisfaction, and when he came on deck an exclamation of mingled surprise and annoyance burst from his lips.

"I oughter be hauled over the coals for a fresh-water sailor! Here I am playin' the part of steward when I should have been lookin' out for my craft!"

"What's the matter, Captain Hiram?"

"I've been careless, little Ellen, an' carelessness comes mighty nigh bein' a crime sometimes."

"Why, what has happened? Hasn't Thomas Hardy steered as he ought?"

"That's it! If anything goes wrong find fault with me," Master Seabury cried impatiently. "I've kept her headed jest as Captain Hiram told me."

"So you have, lad, so you have; an' I wasn't goin' to blame anybody but myself. I saw that fog-bank when we left Oldhaven, an' oughter

kept it well in mind ; but somenow or other thinkin' of little Ellen an' mother put every-thing else out of my head. Now we're in for a smother, an' no mistake."

"What do you mean by a smother, Captain Hiram?"

"Look 'round, child, an' you'll soon find out. Can you see Oldhaven now?"

"No, sir ; that gray cloud is between us and the village."

"An' the gray cloud, child, is fog — that same fog-bank we saw hangin' off the harbor when we started."

"Oh that won't do any harm," Master Seabury replied confidently. "A vessel like this ought to cut right through any fog that ever was."

"So she can, lad ; but how will you know whether you're sailin' into the harbor, or onto the rocks that stand either side?"

"All we've got to do is to go straight back, and we'll be sure to strike it."

"If we did it would be a case of accident, not wisdom, my boy. But you can't go straight back, 'cause we've come out here with the wind, an' must make many a tack before we get into the harbor. Now beatin' about in a fog is what a sailorman don't like."

Master Seabury did not appear to be very greatly alarmed by the prospect before them; and little Ellen, confident of Captain Hiram's ability to take them safely back, allowed the fact to give her no particular uneasiness.

The old man, understanding it was necessary they should make harbor at Dollar Island before the fog enveloped them completely, took the helm himself, much to Thomas Hardy's displeasure, and, trimming the sheets carefully that not an ounce of the wind's weight might be lost, devoted himself entirely to the management of the Island Queen.

"I've got the best the sloop affords spread on the table in the cuddy, little Ellen, an' you may as well fall to now. Take the Jones youngster with you, an' I'll look out for the ship."

Thomas Hardy did not wait for a formal invitation. He was as hungry as boys generally are at any time an hour after a meal has been eaten, and very soon was selecting for himself the most toothsome dish, without any regard as to his sister's desires.

"Put your helm hard down, Thomas Hardy. You're on the wrong tack now," Captain Hiram cried as he observed the movements of the cabin inmates; and Master Seabury looked out in sur-

prise, not understanding the meaning of the warning.

"What's the matter now? I ain't steering."

"If you allow that you're no longer a baby, it's time you was showin' yourself a young gentleman; an' stowin' away grub like that when there's ladies at the table, ain't the proper course by a good many points, lad."

"What am I doing?" and Thomas looked thoroughly bewildered.

"It's what you ain't doin' that I'm findin' fault with," Captain Hiram replied. "Your sister's got some call on your attention, an' I want to see you wait on little Ellen like a boy should. There'll be plenty of time for you to eat after she's 'tended to."

"I guess she's big enough to look out for herself."

"See here, Thomas Hardy, what's that Jones baby doin'?"

"Eating, of course."

"An' given' no attention to anybody else at the table, eh?"

"Of course he ain't. How can you expect a little duffer like him to do anything?"

"I can't; an' if you ain't any older, nor ain't got any better sense than he has, go a head on

the course you're steerin'; but if you allow to be old enough, an' big enough, to have proper manners, why show it by seein' that your sister has the best that can be found, before you begin to stow yourself full."

"Don't, Thomas Hardy, don't!" Ellen whispered warningly as she saw that her brother was about to make an angry reply.

"Seems as if that old man was trying to pick on me all the time," Master Seabury replied sulkily, as, with a very ill grace, he passed his sister the food before continuing the meal.

"When I get back to port I'll change the name of the Island Queen to the Little Ellen, no matter what it costs for new papers," Captain Hiram said emphatically to himself; and then peered ahead anxiously to ascertain if it would be possible to reach a safe anchorage at Dollar Island before the fog closed down upon them.

CHAPTER III.

ADRIFT.

DESPITE the fact that his behavior had been unpleasantly commented on by the owner of the sloop, Master Seabury made a very satisfactory meal, paying no attention whatever to his surroundings until his hunger had been appeased, when he unceremoniously went on deck without regard to his companions.

On emerging from the cuddy an exclamation of surprise burst from his lips.

He could see Captain Hiram at the helm in one direction, and the mainmast of the sloop in the other; but everything else in the immediate vicinity was enveloped in a gray mantle of fog, so dense that the water was trickling from the brim of the helmsman's hat, and from every angle formed by his garments.

"Yes, it has overtook us," Captain Hiram said grimly, as if Thomas Hardy had spoken. "It's overtook us, an' drove away the wind. What do you think now, lad, would be your

chances, pervidin' there was breeze enough to give the sloop steerage-way, if you should try to make Oldhaven harbor."

"I could do it," Master Seabury replied confidently. "I'd sail right in that direction till I got there," and he pointed over the stern.

"You would, eh? Well, I allow it might be a long time before you ever saw Oldhaven agin if you kept on that course. Unless I'm all mixed up, an' I've done my best towards keepin' a straight head, Dollar Island is jest astern of us, an' there's where you count on strikin' Oldhaven."

"Well, you must have got mixed up for a fact," Thomas Hardy said pityingly. "Why, we've been headin' just this way all the time, and of course the stern will be toward the place we came from."

"But you ain't givin' any allowance to the fact, lad, that we swung 'round when the wind died away, 'cause you was in the cabin an' didn't take note of it. The wind petered out 'bout five minutes before the fog struck us, an' then the current pulled the little craft's nose 'round till the last time I saw Dollar Island it was right under her stern. I don't allow we've made any great change of position since then."

Master Seabury was rapidly growing bewildered; and owing to this fact he did not make the reply which he might otherwise have done, but stood gazing in silence at the old man fully a moment before he asked, —

“Well, what are you going to do about it? We can’t stay here, you know.”

“That remains to be seen, lad, although I ain’t allowin’ on stoppin’ outside here any longer’n I can help.”

“It don’t look as if you wanted to get anywhere very soon.”

“Oh, I don’t, eh?” and one of his ferocious expressions came over Captain Hiram’s face, only to disappear as little Ellen, with Samuel Abner in her arms, came into the cockpit from the cuddy. “I was waitin’ till you cabin passengers got through dinner before I went to work.”

“Do you want us to help you in some way, Captain Hiram?” Ellen asked.

“I reckon if you take care of that Jones youngster you’ll have your hands full, little Ellen; but your brother can fit into the berth I’ve got in my mind.”

“What do you want him to do?”

“Jest take the tiller, an’ mind what orders I give. When I sing out ‘Starboard’, he’s to

swing it 'round on his right hand a point or two—that is to say, a couple of inches; an' when I say '*Hard* a-starboard' he's to shove it to the right jest as far as it'll go. It's likewise the same on the other side, except that that is called 'port'."

"Why don't they call it the right and the left side, instead of starboard and port?" Thomas Hardy asked.

"Now you're gettin' beyond me, lad. I s'pose there's an explanation, but I ain't scholar enough to study it out. When you an' little Ellen get home, you might make it your business to learn the reason of them names. Now, if you'll take the tiller, I'll get to work."

Thomas Hardy obeyed willingly; for he was thus placed in a position of command, according to his own ideas, and Captain Hiram hauled alongside the little tender which had been towed astern.

Into her he threw a coil of rope and a pair of oars, saying as he began to clamber over the rail,—

"I'm allowin' to pull the Island Queen into the nearest port, little Ellen; an' if it so be this smother don't clear away before night, or the wind hasn't breezed up, we may lay off Dollar

Island a good bit longer than will be agreeable to any of us."

"Can you pull this big vessel with that small boat, Captain Hiram?"

"Yes, little Ellen, it's possible, the same as a good many other things can be done, by stickin' at it. It don't seem as though a small pair of oars, no matter how they was worked, would take the Island Queen through the water very fast; but so long as you stick at it, the labor is bound to tell. Now then, Thomas Hardy, put your tiller hard a-starboard, an' watch out sharp when I give the next order, 'cause by that time I'll be so far into the smother you can't see me." •

Captain Hiram had but just rowed up under the bow of the sloop when he was hidden from view by the fog, and the passengers could only guess at what he might be doing.

Then came the click of oars in the rowlocks, and a cheery hail from the invisible captain, —

"Mind your eye, my hearties! Keep your helm hard up, an' unless I'm way out of my reckonin' we'll soon fetch Dollar Island."

"It's jest as far around to the right as I can get it," Thomas Hardy shouted, and added in a lower tone to his sister, "The old man don't

know what he's about if he says the island is behind us, 'cause this boat couldn't have turned around without my seeing her."

"Unless one of these oars break, I'll soon show you how much you're mistaken," Captain Hiram cried from out the cloud of mist, and Ellen looked up reprovingly at her brother that he should have spoken thus incautiously.

Thomas Hardy shook his head defiantly, as if to say he was not at all sorry his words had been overheard; but he took good care to make no further remark which might be offensive.

"Now put your helm amidships!" was the order that came from out the fog.

Thomas Hardy looked bewildered, and swung the tiller first one way and then the other, while his sister, understanding that he was at a loss for the meaning of the order, cried,—

"What do you mean by that, Captain Hiram?"

"Hold it straight in the middle—neither to one side nor the other."

"Of course that's what he meant, Nell! Why do you want to make out I don't know a little thing like that?" and Thomas Hardy quickly shifted the helm amidships, fancying he might persuade his sister he was thoroughly conversant

with nautical terms, even though she had seen his hesitation when the command was given.

"Is it amidships?" Captain Hiram shouted.

"It's just as near in the middle as I can get it."

"All right. Keep her so."

Then ensued a long time of silence, save for the clicking of the oars; and Thomas Hardy was about to express his opinion once more relative to the old man's knowledge of their whereabouts, when Captain Hiram suddenly appeared alongside.

"Found that the island wasn't where you thought it was, eh?" Master Seabury asked in a tone of triumph.

"Not exactly that, lad. We're in the cove now, where I said we'd land, an' there's no need of pullin' any more, for I'm goin' to drop anchor."

"And is the island over there?"

"True as a die, lad, though I shouldn't have felt so certain about it if we'd been a leetle further off when the smother come," the captain replied as he went forward; and a moment later a mighty splash told that the anchor had been thrown over.

"Well, this 'ere is one of them times when we must turn ourselves into patient waiters,"

the old man said as he came aft once more, seating himself by Ellen's side.

"Are we to stay here, sir?" she asked.

"There don't seem to be any other way out of it, my child, unless it so be you want to go ashore; but I don't allow there's anything interestin' here, seein's how there's only one house on the place, an' that can't be rightly called more'n a barn."

"How long have we got to wait?" Thomas Hardy demanded almost peremptorily.

"That's a question no one can answer, my lad. We're here till this smother clears up, or the wind comes in strong enough to thin it away so's we can count on holdin' a course."

"I don't think there is very much fun in anything of this kind."

"I ain't allowin' there is, lad; but it's a case of takin' the bitter with the sweet, an' somethin' that man can't help or foresee, though I oughter had sense enough to put back into Oldhaven when I saw how near the bank was."

Master Seabury made no reply, but looked as if he fully agreed with the old man.

"Why don't you go and get your dinner, Captain Hiram?"

"So I will, little Ellen. It would have been

strange if you hadn't thought of other folks' comfort instead of your own at a time like this, when some children would be grumblin' or findin' fault 'cause they was in sich a scrape."

"It doesn't seem so to me, sir. You have been working, and need something to eat, while we who did nothing have had a hearty dinner."

"Did it taste good, little Ellen?"

"Indeed it did, sir."

"Then I reckon that's jest about as well for me as if I'd been fed right up on turkey. It ain't often I get a chance to do a favor for sich as you. I guess we'd better belay the Jones youngster to that door once more; he's too heavy for you to hold."

"But it seems cruel to tie the little thing as if he was a dog."

"Lord love you, child, he don't mind it, an' I ain't so sure but it makes him feel at home; for that's a trick Sarah Jones has had with all her children, though you can't blame the poor woman, seein's how she's got seven or eight of 'em, an' the biggest not more'n a baby."

Then, having secured Samuel Abner, Captain Hiram went into the cuddy, while Thomas Hardy sat swinging the tiller back and forth idly, with an expression of discontent upon his

face, and Ellen did her best to amuse the captive baby.

When the owner of the *Island Queen* came into the cockpit once more he gazed around anxiously, as if trying to peer through the gray fog, consulted his watch, and said half to himself, —

“I allow it wouldn’t be a bad idee to go ashore an’ see what old Hubbard’s got in the way of grub. I never keep any great stock of provision on board unless I’m startin’ out on a long cruise; an’ it ain’t no way certain but that we may have to stay here quite a spell, perhaps til to-morrow mornin’, in which case we’d be on short allowance.”

“Are you counting on staying here as long as that?” Thomas Hardy asked impatiently.

“I was only reckonin’ it might be we’d have to, an’ thinkin’ of pervidin’ agin sich an event.”

“I am sure you needn’t go for food, sir,” Ellen said quickly. “If we keep something for the baby, the rest of us should be able to get along on what there is in the cabin, even if we don’t get home for two days.”

“There’s no necessity of our goin’ on a short allowance, little Ellen; an’ I shouldn’t rest easy a single minute if I thought you was hungry. It’s only the cost of pullin’ from here to the

shore, an' then walkin' a quarter of a mile or more."

"How far are we from the land, sir?"

"Not more'n a stone's throw. I could almost have jumped ashore when I stopped pullin'."

"Why don't you haul the vessel in there, so we can all land?" Thomas Hardy asked.

"'Cause it wouldn't be anyways safe, lad. There are too many rocks hereabouts, an' I don't care to pound a hole in the sloop's bottom. Now, little Ellen, I shall leave you in command, knowin' everything will be kept shipshape. If it so be you hear me hail, answer in short order, for it ain't any easy matter to run alongside a craft like this in the fog. I won't be gone over an' above half an hour."

Captain Hiram clambered over the rail into the tender, cast off the painter, and was almost immediately swallowed up by the fog.

Five minutes later he shouted cheerily, —

"I'm ashore, little Ellen! Keep your weather eye liftin', an' don't let Thomas Hardy run away with the Island Queen, though I ain't allowin' he'd get very far in this calm."

"We'll all stay here quietly, sir," Ellen replied; and then Samuel Abner demanded her attention as he fell headlong into the cuddy, giving vent

to such a series of shrieks as convinced the tiny girl he was seriously injured.

It was fully a quarter of an hour before this representative of the Jones family was reduced to silence once more, and when Ellen brought him on deck again Master Seabury was nowhere to be seen.

"Thomas Hardy! Thomas Hardy Seabury! Where are you?"

"Here! What are you making such a row for? Can't a fellow walk around but you must begin to screech?"

"But it frightened me when I couldn't see you anywhere."

"You're a regular coward, and always were. I'd be ashamed to get scared so often!"

"What are you doing?"

"Nothing except fixing things."

"But you mustn't touch the ropes, Thomas Hardy. Don't you remember what Captain Hiram said?"

"Oh, he's a regular old woman! Thinks he's got to be jawing somebody all the time. I guess I know enough about vessels to walk from one end to the other without your making a row!"

Ellen was not satisfied that her brother was doing exactly as he ought, and, literally stagger-

ing under the weight of Samuel Abner, for she did not dare allow him to walk on the deck, the child went forward.

Thomas Hardy was playing the part of sailor by untying or re-tying this rope or that, swaying down on the taut halyards, or hauling in the sheet of the jib, in the most industrious fashion.

"Oh, dear, why don't you let things alone, Thomas Hardy? I am certain you will do some mischief; and what would Captain Hiram say if he found the ship destroyed when he got back?"

"Now look here, Nell, don't you s'pose I know what I'm about? The idea of destroying a big vessel like this! I'll have things all ready for him when he comes back, so if the fog goes away we can start right off; and that's what I want to do, for we've had enough of this kind of fooling."

"But we haven't been here very long, and surely it can't be such a great hardship to sit still half an hour. Now please don't do that, Thomas Hardy!"

"Look here, Nell, I don't want you to interfere so much. I guess I can untie this rope if I want to. It don't hold up the sails, and where's the harm?"

As he spoke Master Seabury cast off the cable from the windlass, and stood with the end in his

hand as if to show his sister he was sufficiently well versed in such matters to do as he pleased without the possibility of making a mistake.

She, realizing that nothing could be effected by entreaties, remained silent until he, tired of thus displaying his seamanship, carelessly twisted the cable around the windlass once more.

"There, now, what harm has been done? Girls think nobody but a man can do such things, and I'll show you before we get back to Oldhaven how much I know about sailing a vessel!"

"But why not go into the other end where we were, and sit down quietly? You never was at sea before, and can't be expected to know as much as a sailor like Captain Hiram. It would be terrible if you should do something that was wrong."

"Now, don't go to fussing. Why, if that old pirate never got back, I'd be able to take this boat to Oldhaven. Didn't I bring her most of the way over here?"

"That was when Captain Hiram sat right by your side to explain what should be done."

"Not much, it wasn't. Have you forgotten how long he stayed in the cabin eating his dinner? Didn't I have the whole charge of her then?"

"Yes," Ellen replied hesitatingly; "I suppose

you did. But if anything had happened, he was with us; and that is a very different matter from playing with these ropes the way you are doing now. Besides—what was that?" she exclaimed, as a sudden splash was heard.

The cable, having been simply wound around the windlass instead of being made fast, had slipped over the rail, owing to the influence of the current upon the sloop; and the *Island Queen* was adrift.

"It was only a piece of rope falling overboard,—that's all," Master Seabury replied; but that he was far from feeling as much at ease as he would have his sister understand, could be readily told by the expression on his face.

"Have you lost it?"

"I haven't done anything with it. It just slipped over; that's all. If Captain Hiram wants it, he can go and get it, for all I care."

"But it has sunk."

"S'posen it has? What's the use of fussing about a little thing like that? He ought to have known whether it would go into the water or not. If he don't attend to his business, I ain't going to bother my head over it."

"Perhaps it wouldn't have slipped over if you hadn't untied it."

"Now you're talking nonsense! Didn't I put it right back where I found it?"

"Yes, you laid it up on that piece of wood; but it doesn't seem possible Captain Hiram would have left it where it could be lost so easily."

"I s'pose the anchor pulled it over."

"And is the anchor on the end of it?" Ellen asked in alarm.

"Course it is."

"But Thomas — Thomas Hardy! — if the anchor is gone, what is keeping us here?"

"Keeping us, you foolish girl! How can we go when there ain't any wind? We've got to stay here, that's all; and it don't make any difference whether the anchor is tied to us or not."

"Of course it does, Thomas, else Captain Hiram never would have taken the trouble to drop it overboard."

Master Seabury made no reply. There was a dim suspicion in his mind that this loss of the cable might mean more than he had tried to make his sister believe; and he walked aft decidedly disturbed in mind.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE FOG.

ELLEN stood gazing over the rail at the point where the cable had disappeared, wondering whether any serious mischief had really been done, until Samuel Abner diverted her attention by beginning to cry most vehemently.

Since there was, so far as she could judge, no change in the condition of affairs because of the loss of the rope, there seemed to be no reason why she should not give all her attention to the baby; and, with a view of soothing his supposed distress, she carried him into the cuddy.

The remnants of the dinner were still on the swinging table; and after the Jones baby had been treated to a large piece of corned beef he appeared to be in a more placid humor, but nearly half an hour elapsed before Ellen dared leave him long enough to go on deck.

The little sloop was still enveloped in the dense fog, therefore nothing could be seen to

determine whether she had changed her position since parting company with the anchor.

Master Seabury was sitting near the tiller, holding it firmly with one hand, and looking ill at ease, if not remorseful.

"Why are you doing that, Thomas Hardy?" Ellen asked curiously. "Surely you don't think it possible the vessel could go through the water while we are in the harbor?"

"I guess it can't do any harm if I hold this," Master Seabury replied, in an unusually mild tone.

As a matter of fact, he had a very good idea of what might have happened, although he did not propose to make his sister acquainted with it. While she had been in the cabin caring for Samuel Abner, he revolved the matter in his mind until becoming convinced that the sloop would drift out of the harbor, now she was no longer held by the anchor.

That this was true he understood by the fact that she had tugged at the cable with sufficient strength to detach it from the windlass, whereas, had there been no force of current against her, the rope would have remained in place, even though it was only loosely passed over the timbers.

Believing this, Thomas Hardy realized that he had foolishly and wilfully plunged them all into a position of the gravest danger; but yet, without knowing exactly why, he thought it best to keep his sister in ignorance of the fact, as long as possible.

"Captain Hiram promised to be back in half an hour, and we must listen in order to answer if he hails, for he said it might be necessary for us to let him know where the sloop was."

"He hasn't been gone as long as that yet."

"I think he has, Thomas Hardy. I was in the cabin quite a while, and" —

A gurgling cry of distress from the Jones baby caused little Ellen to return hurriedly to the cuddy, where she found Samuel Abner in quite a critical condition.

He had swallowed one end of a slice of salt meat, and was in danger of strangulation.

"Come and help me, Thomas Hardy!" she cried. "I am afraid I've killed the baby; I should have known better than to give him so much meat!"

Master Seabury made no move toward answering his sister's cry for help. He believed the sloop was moving through the water, and fancied it was absolutely necessary he should remain

at the helm in order to keep her headed in the direction where he believed was Oldhaven.

Had he had more experience, he would have needed to give but one glance at the sails to see that they were not drawing, and known that she did not have steerage-way if carried along wholly by the current.

Fortunately Ellen did not really need her brother's assistance. She had appealed for aid without expecting any, for Thomas Hardy was not a boy who could be of much service on such an occasion; and in a few moments the danger had passed.

The meat was speedily removed; and Samuel Abner forgot his previous suffering in the desire to regain possession of the tempting morsel.

"No, I sha'n't allow you to have anything of the kind," Ellen said decidedly, as she carried him on deck. "Can you tie him to the door as Captain Hiram did, Thomas Hardy?"

"I must stay right here," Master Seabury replied curtly, not daring to look at his sister.

"Why? What need is there of any work like that when we are so near the land?"

"I s'pose I can if I want to, can't I?" and Thomas spoke so angrily that his sister looked at him in astonishment.

Noting the pallor of his face, she was about to ask if he was sick, when an unusual sound broke the stillness.

"What can that be?" she asked; and as Master Seabury's attention was thus directed to it, he grew actually livid with fear.

He had no idea as to what it might be, but, understanding better than did Ellen the condition of affairs, feared some terrible peril was close at hand; and as a matter of fact Master Seabury had good cause for fear, although he could not say why.

"I know what it is!" Ellen suddenly exclaimed, the look of apprehension passing quickly from her face. "Don't you remember, Thomas Hardy, how much we heard it when we came from home?"

"What is it?"

"Nothing but the paddle-wheels of a steamer. Perhaps it is the very one that brought us here," Ellen replied with a laugh; and then the smile left her face as she asked, "but why is she so near the island? I am certain big boats don't stop here, for mother said so."

"It sounds as if she was coming right for us, don't it?" Thomas Hardy asked in a tremulous voice, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears.

"It surely does. O Tommy! suppose she should sail into this harbor and run over us? While it is so foggy her sailors can't see our vessel! I do wish Captain Hiram would come! We must shout for him; perhaps he is near enough to hear us."

Thomas Hardy could no longer keep his fears a secret. Although not a sailor, he understood full well to how much danger they were exposed, and the truth came to his lips.

"We have drifted out to sea, Ellen!" he cried wailingly. "When I untied that rope, there was nothing to hold the sloop in the harbor where Captain Hiram left us. That's why I have stayed here with the rudder, so's I could steer her into Oldhaven."

Ellen stood gazing at him in fear and astonishment until the full truth of his statement came to her mind; and then, instead of reproaching her brother, she took Samuel Abner in her arms, hugging him tightly as if it were possible to shield him from the impending danger.

"Why don't you say something?" Thomas Hardy asked angrily, his face growing more livid as the beating of the paddles sounded nearer and nearer.

"What can I say?" Ellen asked piteously. "If we are really drifting around as you think"—

"Of course we are. How long has Captain Hiram been away? More'n an hour; and before this he's been down to the shore hollering for us."

"But he couldn't find the sloop while the fog is so thick."

"What's the use of talking such foolishness? Why, you can't see from this place to the other end of the vessel; and here's a steamer coming right down on us! What are we going to do, Ellen? What *are* we going to do?"

Now the slight semblance of courage which Master Seabury had retained deserted him; and relinquishing his hold of the tiller, he threw himself upon the deck in the anguish of terror.

Thomas Hardy's loud wailings frightened Samuel Abner to such an extent that he also began to cry piteously; and poor little Ellen was thus left worse than alone.

She attempted to arouse her brother by proposing that it might be possible to do something toward warding off the impending danger; that by uniting their voices there was a possibility those on board the on-coming steamer

would hear their cries; but Thomas Hardy was insensible to all her arguments, and for an instant she sat motionless, giving not so much heed to the perils which threatened, as to the desire to soothe the sufferings of her companions.

The sloop was rolling to and fro on the ocean swell, having cleared the protection of the island, her sails swinging from side to side and her boom creaking on the spar; close at hand the reverberations of the paddle-wheels telling of the mighty fabric which was churning its way directly toward them. The gray fog enveloped everything in a sombre mantle, shutting out from view the huge vessel which might soon send the young voyagers to a watery grave, and at the same time concealing their little craft from those who would willingly avert the threatened destruction, while from out the gloomy mist came a sweet, clear voice:—

“In the hollow of Thy hand are we upheld.”

Thomas Hardy no longer gave words to his terror; the baby hushed its wailings, and clung confidently to the tiny nurse; while she, having no thought for herself, realized only the fact that her service of song was relieving the sufferings of others.

Nearer and nearer sounded the beating of the heavy wheels upon the water; and when the noise in little Ellen's ears was like that of thunder, a hoarse voice could be heard even amid the tumult, shouting:—

“Port! Port for your life! There's a craft of some kind in our course!”

Little Ellen hardly heard the words, or, if hearing, did not understand their import, but continued her song until suddenly there appeared from out the fog, hardly a dozen yards away, a ponderous white mass, glinted here and there with yellow metal. There was a momentary vision as of gigantic arms waving in the midst of a cascade, and then the gray fog intervened once more as the *Island Queen* danced madly to and fro in the wake of the steamer, which had turned ever so slightly in her course; but that deviation had been sufficient to save the three children from a cruel death.

The boom threshed to and fro across the deck as the sloop was whirled from one side to the other by the violently agitated billows; and little Ellen crouched close by her brother's side, not ceasing her song, which gave comfort to the others, until the *Island Queen* rode on a steady keel once more, while the beating of the paddle-

wheels sounded fainter and fainter in the distance.

"Get up, dear; the ship has gone past us. You must be a man now, doing what you can to help us get back to Oldhaven. O Thomas Hardy! Thomas Hardy! How terribly unhappy poor mother will be when it comes night, and we are not with her! How she will suffer!"

"She won't have it as hard as we shall," Master Seabury said mournfully, as he arose to his feet and looked wildly around. "Can't you do something, Ellen? If you don't, we shall have to stay out here all night; and then what *will* become of us?"

"How *can* I do anything, dear? I don't even know which way we should go to reach Oldhaven?"

"Neither do I," Thomas Hardy replied with a moan. "I did before that steamer came; but now I've forgotten all about it. We shall drift around here till we die; that's what we'll do!" and Master Seabury was on the point of giving way to his grief once more, when little Ellen said gently, —

"Some one must find us before the food is gone; and it won't be nearly as hard for us as for poor mother and Mrs. Jones."

"Why do you keep thinking of other people

when we are in such a terrible scrape? We've got trouble enough of our own, without pitying folks what are safe and sound on the land."

"But it will do us no good, Thomas Hardy, to speak of our own condition."

"What's the reason it won't? We shall be starved to death by to-morrow morning."

"I'm certain that isn't true. Come into the cabin with me, and see how much there is on the table."

Master Seabury allowed his sister to lead him below; and there the sight of what appeared to be a plentiful supply of food seemed to restore to him at least a portion of his courage.

There was no longer any immediate danger. The sloop rocked lazily on the swell; and being adrift during a fog-storm did not seem to be a very serious matter, now the steamer had passed them by in safety.

"You look out for the baby, and I'll tend to the vessel," Thomas Hardy said in a tone of authority; and Ellen understood that he was no longer the victim of despair.

Again he took his station at the tiller, although there was not a breath of wind stirring; and, holding it amidships, imagined he was directing the course of the sloop.

Once more he believed he knew in which direction Oldhaven might be found; and, since the fog continued as dense as when it first shut down, there was nothing to undeceive him.

Ellen, relieved in mind because her brother was no longer in an agony of terror, set about clearing the table, putting the food carefully away in the tiny locker that none should he wasted in case the sloop was tossed more violently by the waves; and while she was thus employed Samuel Abner amused himself by making a tour of exploration around the cuddy.

Not until everything below was apparently in its proper place did the little woman cease her labors; and then, with the Jones baby in her arms, she went into the cockpit.

"If that young one is coming out here you must see he don't bother me," Thomas Hardy said with a tone and air of authority. "It's as much as I can do to manage this vessel, without having a girl hanging around."

"I sha'n't be in the way; for you have nothing to do but sit where you are."

"That's all you know about sailing a vessel, Ellen Seabury. Suppose the wind should begin to howl, wouldn't I have to look out for the boat? And how could I do it if you was in the way?"

"I am willing to go into the cabin if it will make the work any lighter for you."

"Then why don't you do it? I'm the man at the wheel; and you remember the notice that was painted on the steamer we came here in?"

"Which one?"

"The sign on that little house what said, 'No talking to the man at the wheel.'"

"Yes, I remember; but I didn't know why it was there."

"That's 'cause you don't know much of anything about sailing vessels. You mustn't talk to the man at the wheel, for he don't want to be bothered with answering questions when he's got as much as he can do to look out for the steering."

Ellen was silent a few seconds, and then she asked, —

"Would it be better for you if I took Samuel Abner into the cabin?"

"There you go, asking foolish questions, and bothering me! Of course it would."

Ellen did as she had suggested, and Thomas Hardy sincerely regretted having proposed such a move. He much preferred to have his sister on deck, but it seemed very pleasant to make a show of authority; and the result was that he was left in solitary state at the now useless tiller.

Samuel Abner had not been taken below without making quite a violent protest, but little Ellen finally succeeded in quieting him by singing; and half an hour later the almost perfect silence told the helmsman that the Jones baby was in the realms of dreamland.

Even the nurse had succumbed to the soothing influence of her own lullaby, and Thomas Hardy felt that he was indeed alone.

It seemed strange that the Island Queen had not entered the harbor of Oldhaven. Time was passing very slowly, and it appeared to him as if one full day had elapsed since the moment the cable slipped over the rail; but yet the sloop was apparently farther from the land than when she started on this independent cruise.

He struggled hard to preserve his dignity as master of the vessel; but the sameness of the fog on every side oppressed him; the soft lip, lip, lipping of the water against the sloop's sides made him nervous; and once more he began to speculate upon the possible ending of this involuntary voyage.

Such reflections were not calculated to soothe Master Seabury; and before Ellen had been wrapped in the blissful unconsciousness of slumber ten minutes, he was shouting wildly, —

"Why don't you come on deck? Do you think I can run this vessel alone?"

"What's the matter?" Ellen cried anxiously, as she darted out of the cuddy before her eyes were fairly open.

"I should think there was a good deal the matter," Thomas Hardy replied petulantly. "You go to sleep just as if there was nothing to be done, and leave me with all the work on my hands. That's just like girls; they never want to do anything, no matter how busy a fellow is!"

"Why, Thomas Hardy! You told me to go into the cabin."

"S'posen I did? I never said you was to go to sleep, did I?"

"But I didn't intend to do anything of the kind, Thomas. Singing to the baby made me sleepy, and my eyes closed before I knew it."

"And I must be left here alone to get you out of this scrape, I s'pose?"

Ellen did not say, as she might have done with perfect truth, that but for him they would not have been in any trouble. She replied cheerily, —

"I will be glad to help you in any way, Thomas Hardy. What do you want done?"

"Nothing, just now; but there's no telling how

soon all hands ought to be on deck. S'posen we run bang into the harbor, how will I stop the vessel alone?"

"I don't think there is much danger of that; for it doesn't seem to me as if we were moving."

"Of course we are, else why would I have to stay here with the rudder?"

"When we sailed before, I could see foam behind us, but now there isn't so much as a ripple."

Thomas Hardy looked behind him very quickly. He could see the water under the stern, and it was as Ellen had said.

"How long have you known that?" he asked angrily.

"I noticed it before you told me to carry the baby into the cabin."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I thought of course you knew it."

"Then why did you think I stayed right here?"

"That was what I didn't know. You said it must be done; and I thought perhaps you knew best."

"Oh, yes you did! That's one of your sly tricks, trying to make me work when there's no need of it!"

"It wasn't very hard to sit with your hand

on that stick of wood, Thomas Hardy. You might as well have sat there as anywhere else."

"You're mean; that's what you are, Ellen Seabury. Next time I go out sailing you'll have to stay at home, for I won't take you with me!"

"I wish I was there now!" the child exclaimed with a short, sharp sob as her eyes filled with tears; and almost instantly she turned her head aside lest her brother should be disheartened by her show of distress.

Master Seabury remained silent. The unpleasant knowledge that the sloop was making no progress, gave him new food for thought; and as he grew alarmed at the prospect of thus drifting on the sea during the night, terrors similar to those which assailed him when the steamer was so near came upon him, until he burst into tears.

"Don't, dear, please don't!" Ellen said pleadingly as she put her arms around the boy's neck. "Try to be brave; and when God sees us three helpless children out here alone in this vessel, He surely will help us."

CHAPTER V.

AGROUND.

IT was a long while before Thomas Hardy would be comforted, and then he had additional cause for terror.

Because of the fog there had been no twilight to announce the coming of night; but the gray mist suddenly took on a darker hue, and in a few moments all was darkness.

"Now there's no chance anybody can see us!" Master Seabury wailed; "and before morning we may all be drowned!"

At this moment Samuel Abner awoke with a cry of fear; and once more was little Ellen forced to play the part of nurse to both her companions.

With the baby in her arms, and seated by the side of Thomas Hardy, the brave little woman began to sing once more; and again the sound of her voice checked the loud evidences of grief.

"We must go into the cabin," she said in a whisper, as if fearing to speak aloud. "Everything is wet out here, and we shall be in no

more danger there. If you will take the baby, dear, I'll try to light the lantern."

"I don't believe there is one on board this vessel. There isn't anything here we ought to have."

"I saw the lantern when I was putting the baby to sleep, and it won't seem so lonely if the cabin is lighted."

"I don't see how that is going to make any difference."

"If you had rather not have a light, I had as soon do without one."

As a matter of fact, Thomas Hardy would have been most wretched if obliged to remain in the darkness during all the long night, and he said ungraciously,—

"Go ahead and do as you're a mind to; what *I* want don't make any difference."

"Of course it does, dear. I shouldn't have spoken of the lantern if I hadn't thought you would rather have the cabin lighted."

"Give me the baby, and don't make so much talk about nothing," Thomas Hardy replied petulantly, pushing his sister toward the cuddy. "It does seem as if we'd got trouble enough, without your bringing this miserable young one along to make more work."

"I will take care of him, so don't let a little thing like that fret you. There is really no need of the lantern."

"Of course there is!" Thomas Hardy cried angrily. "It seems as if you was bound not to do anything to please me."

Ellen made no reply; but, hurrying into the cuddy, groped around until she found Captain Hiram's store of matches, after which the lantern was quickly lighted.

It was not unpleasant, this little cabin, now it was illuminated; and Master Seabury so far recovered from his fears as to be able to make a very hearty supper, while his sister fed Samuel Abner.

But for the fact that they were adrift, in danger of being run down by any passing craft, this adventure might not have been so very unpleasant; and Thomas Hardy put from his mind for the moment all disagreeable facts, as he tried to imagine that he was simply cruising in his own craft, with an able and willing crew on deck.

"If the wind would come up now, I could soon run her back to Oldhaven," he said confidently, after the meal was concluded.

"Do you think you know where the village is?"

"Of course I do. Anybody'd think to hear you talk, Ellen Seabury, that I never saw a vessel before."

"I am certain you have never been in one."

"What difference does that make? Boys know how to do such things without being told. Didn't I steer this vessel nearly all the way from Old-haven to Dollar Island?"

Ellen did not again remind her brother that he had simply acted as helmsman under Captain Hiram's directions. He was in a reasonably cheerful frame of mind; and to contradict him, or to make any attempt at putting matters in their proper light, would only result in bringing about another disagreeable outburst; therefore she remained silent.

"The sails are up, for I helped fix them; and if the wind comes, I should only have to keep the rudder right to take her into the harbor. When it does come, I sha'n't bother about going back after Captain Hiram. He finds too much fault to suit me; and most likely this is the last time I'll ever go out in his old vessel."

"I am afraid it is, dear; for he will be very angry because we have lost his anchor and rope."

"That wasn't my fault. If he'd tied the rope right it wouldn't have slipped off the sticks."

"But you untied it, dear."

"So that's the story you're going to tell, is it?" And now Thomas Hardy's placid mood was gone, almost as soon as it had come.

"Isn't it true?" Ellen asked, regretting most heartily that she had mentioned such a subject.

"I put it back just as I found it. Besides, wasn't it my business to see if everything was fixed right?"

Ellen made no reply, but bent over the baby as if he needed her immediate attention, although the little Jones was in a particularly contented frame of mind, owing to the fact that he had a bunch of oakum with which to play.

Now, Thomas Hardy knew beyond a doubt that he was wholly and solely responsible for the present condition of affairs; yet he seemed disposed to shift the blame to Captain Hiram's shoulders, and continued to discuss the matter aloud, without receiving any reply from his sister, until a humming sound could be heard from above, and the sloop suddenly heeled over at such an angle that he was thrown from the locker to the floor.

"What did that?" he cried, as soon as it was possible to rise to his feet. And, placing the baby in what she fancied was a secure position, Ellen hurried on deck.

"O Thomas Hardy!" she cried in delight, "the wind has come up just as you wanted; and now we can sail back to Oldhaven. Perhaps we shall get there before it is time for mother to go to bed!"

Master Seabury came on deck slowly; but his bearing was no longer as confident as when he had been explaining what he intended to do under just such circumstances.

There was no question as to the truth of Ellen's statement. A breeze was singing through the rigging, and the sails were filled, causing the little craft to slip through the water with the accompaniment of foaming waves under her bow.

Thomas Hardy took his station at the tiller, holding it exactly amidships, but sorely at a loss to determine in which direction he should steer in order to reach the desired port; and at that moment a most unaccountable (to Thomas Hardy) change occurred.

The sails of the *Island Queen* suddenly lost the wind, and began to flap severely; after which the heavy boom swung swiftly from one rail to the other, when the little craft was heeled on the opposite side, throwing Samuel Abner across the cuddy with a thud that could be distinctly heard on deck.

As a matter of course, the Jones baby began to scream loudly; and Ellen hastened to his assistance.

"What are you going down there for?" Thomas Hardy cried in fear. "Why don't you stay here and help me?"

"What can I do, dear?" she asked, halting irresolutely at the companion-way, while the baby's cries were redoubled.

"I don't know; but it does seem as if you could do something!"

"What do you want done?"

"How can I tell?" and Thomas Hardy pushed the tiller back and forth wildly. "Something's the matter with this old vessel, or she wouldn't act so queer."

Ellen no longer hesitated. She understood that her brother was again frightened into nervous anger, and went at once to the cuddy, where poor little Samuel Abner was rolling to and fro on the floor, shrieking at the full strength of his lungs as the *Island Queen* pitched first this way and then that in the most erratic manner.

That the baby had good cause for tears was shown by a wound on his cheek, which had been inflicted when he was first thrown from

the locker; and Ellen had quite as much as she could do in attending to him, without even thinking of the petulant, ignorant boy on deck, who had boasted so loudly of what he would do when the wind sprang up.

Now it was that Thomas Hardy was being made to understand he knew nothing whatever about sailing a vessel; for, owing to his reckless management of the helm, the sloop's sails were no sooner filled than she was allowed to "fall off," with the natural result that as she swung around on another tack the inclination of her hull was in the opposite direction, which rendered it decidedly uncomfortable for those on board.

The fog was being rapidly dispersed by the breeze; and had Captain Hiram held the tiller, the *Island Queen* would soon have been safely moored in Oldhaven roadstead.

As it was, however, there seemed every danger the sloop would be capsized if the wind increased in force; and even Thomas Hardy understood that such a catastrophe might happen.

"Why don't you bring that lantern on deck?" he shouted angrily. "How do you s'pose I can sail this vessel in the dark?"

"It is broken. When the vessel tipped over

it was knocked from the table; and I think Samuel Abner has cut his face with the pieces of glass. It is bleeding badly, and I can hardly see how to bind it up."

Little Ellen had torn her handkerchief into strips to form a bandage; but, owing to the position of the wound, it was very difficult to so arrange it that it would neither slip off nor smother the child; and she was on the verge of terror lest he should bleed to death.

Thomas Hardy no longer made any effort to behave in a rational manner. At that moment it seemed to him as if the loss of the lantern was the most serious that could have befallen him; and he ran into the cuddy, crouching by his sister's side as he took refuge in tears.

"Why don't you stay up there and take care of the vessel?" she asked, speaking sternly for the first time since his folly had brought them into such straits.

"There is something wrong with the old boat; and, besides, I can't see how to steer now you've let the lantern break."

"Thomas Hardy, I am ashamed of you! Just as soon as there is any danger you begin to cry like a baby! Why don't you try to be a man?"

"What's the use, when we're going to be drowned?" Master Seabury wailed. "The wind is tipping us over, and I can't do anything to stop it!"

"Then be quiet. Your crying won't make matters any better; and the least you can do is to behave."

"Now you're picking on me, same's you always do. You'll be sorry, Ellen Seabury, when I'm drowned."

"I am sorry now, dear," the little woman said quickly, as she ceased her ministrations to Samuel Abner sufficiently long to caress her brother's cheek. "It was wicked of me to speak sharply when we are in such danger; and I won't ever do so again. Won't you help me tie up this cut in the baby's face?"

"How can I do anything like that when we're going to be tipped over and drowned?"

"It won't make the danger any greater for us to do what we can to help the poor little fellow. He must be suffering terribly, and I am afraid he'll bleed to death."

"That'll be better than drowning; and we never shall see mother again."

Ellen understood that it was worse than useless to argue with Thomas Hardy while he was

in such a frame of mind; and once more she gave her undivided attention to the baby.

Master Seabury was lying at full length on the locker, having deliberately crowded his sister and Samuel Abner off, and at every new lurch of the sloop screamed so loudly that one would have supposed he was suffering the most intense pain.

Ellen succeeded in binding up the wound after a very poor fashion, and had raised the child in her arms intending to go on deck, when the *Island Queen* stopped so suddenly that she was thrown to the forward end of the cuddy with sufficient force to render her insensible for several moments.

Thomas Hardy was now so thoroughly alarmed as to be unable even to scream.

He heard a crashing as of timbers splintered; was conscious of the fact that the sloop rose once more; and as she settled down again there was a grinding and rending of wood, after which she remained motionless.

"Ellen! Ellen! Where are you?"

There was no reply until Samuel Abner began to cry furiously; but little Ellen remained silent.

Master Seabury now thought only of his own

peril, and, making no attempt to understand why his sister did not speak, clambered on deck after considerable difficulty, for the sloop was heeled over on her beam ends.

Despite the darkness, he could see directly astern a high cliff; and on either side the spray was dashing up, falling on the deck like a downpour of rain. It was as if the Island Queen was in the midst of a whirlpool, so madly did the foaming waters swirl and boil; but the rocks held her immovable for the waves to beat against until she should be torn to pieces.

The sight was so terrible that Master Seabury was glad to return to the cuddy very quickly; and he entered just as Ellen arose to her feet.

"Why didn't you speak when I hollered?" he asked, too thoroughly frightened to be angry.

"I didn't hear you, dear. Perhaps I fainted, for I don't seem to remember what happened after I hit my head against some of the timbers. Is anything wrong?"

"Wrong? We're shipwrecked, that's what's wrong, and never'll see mother again. The vessel is on a lot of rocks, and the water will soon fill her full, for it's coming down on deck in streams."

Ellen would have looked out, but that Samuel Abner was screaming at the full strength of his lungs, and she considered it her duty to soothe him before doing anything else.

During ten minutes she alternately sang and talked to the child; and then the fact became apparent that the cabin floor was covered with water.

"Can you shut the door, Thomas? It is raining in here."

Master Seabury made no reply. He was lying face downward upon the locker, apparently oblivious to everything save a sense of his own danger.

Ellen started toward the cuddy door, when she became aware that the water was pouring in at the bow, and, turning, was struck by a jet which had found its way between the shattered timbers.

"We must go on deck, Thomas dear," she said, shaking her brother gently to attract his attention. "The water is quite deep on the floor, and coming in very fast."

"It's like going out in a rain-storm up there," Master Seabury sobbed.

"It can't be as bad as it will soon be here. Come, dear; if you are brave now, some one will help us by morning."

"We'll all be dead before then," the terrified boy replied, making no movement.

It was impossible for Ellen to do more than urge him to follow her, hampered as she was by the baby; and, hugging Samuel Abner tightly lest he should manage to squirm from her arms, she scrambled to the deck.

Here the same forbidding view which had reduced Thomas Hardy to helplessness met her gaze; but she was more brave than her brother, and resolutely forced herself to look at the angry, boiling waters, as she tried to decide what should be done.

After some moments, when the scene appeared less wild because she was more familiar with it, Ellen understood that the sloop was in little danger of sinking, owing to the fact that she had been flung high up on the rocks. The immediate peril appeared to be that she might be dashed to pieces by the furious waves.

Samuel Abner had not ceased to cry; but his voice was hardly heard above the roar of the waters, and his nurse made no effort to still him.

Ellen realized that if anything was to be done for the safety of all she was the one who must do it, since Thomas Hardy would be of no more assistance than the Jones baby; and now all her

efforts were bent toward getting a thorough idea of the condition of the sloop.

That the forward timbers of the little craft were shattered beyond all future usefulness there could be no question; and unless the furious pounding of the waves ceased very soon, the Island Queen must be torn into fragments.

"If we could only get on those rocks!" Ellen said to herself, as she stood in the extreme stern gazing upward at the cliffs.

Both she and the baby were drenched by the flying spray; yet she heeded this discomfort as little as she did Samuel Abner's piercing screams.

During five minutes she stood as if helpless; and then it seemed as if the water did not reach as high a point as formerly.

Leaning over the rail she watched eagerly, hardly breathing in her intense anxiety; and then the cheering fact was apparent. The waves were not decreasing in violence, but they were receding; and it might soon be possible to leave the wreck, and take refuge on the cliff.

"Come here, Thomas dear!" she cried. "We are on a big rock, and the tide is going down! It can't be a great while before we can get ashore!"

This welcome intelligence aroused Master Sea-

bury from his stupor of fear ; and he came slowly out of the half-submerged cabin to stand by his sister's side, holding tightly to her dress as if for protection.

"I am certain the water is going down," she said, forced to shout in order that he might hear ; for the roar of the waves was almost deafening. "It came over the side of the vessel when I first saw it ; and now there are times when you can hardly touch it, even though you lean over."

Thomas Hardy stood as if stupefied, not even bending his body to ascertain the truth of her statement ; and Samuel Abner had grown weary with screaming when the waves outstripped him in noise.

"In a little while we can step out on the rock ; and then we shall have a safe place in which to wait until some one comes. How sorry I am that poor Captain Hiram has lost his vessel through us !"

The fog had entirely disappeared ; and one by one the stars were peeping out, as if eager to see why it was the Island Queen remained in such an unnatural position.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RESCUE.

SOON after the stars began to show themselves the moon crept out from behind the fleecy clouds, and the shipwrecked children were able to discern surrounding objects almost as clearly as at noonday.

It must have been nearly high water when the *Island Queen* was flung stern foremost upon the rocks, at the foot of a precipitous cliff which rose directly out of the sea several hundred yards from the mainland.

The bow of the sloop had received the greatest injury, because the waves could exert their full force upon it; and as little Ellen gazed, eager to note every detail, she saw that all the planking forward had been crushed and riven, while aft the timbers were apparently intact. The bowsprit had been carried away, but the mast still remained standing.

Now the waves hardly reached the wreck, and the rocks were so nearly bare that it would have

been safe to venture out upon them. In fact, Master Seabury proposed to do so instantly they were exposed to view; for his terror was so unreasoning that he feared to remain on the shattered hulk any longer than was absolutely necessary.

"You must not go, Thomas Hardy! Indeed you must not go!" the little woman cried, as she clutched him by the coat-sleeve with one hand, while she held the baby firmly with the other. "Those rocks, covered with seaweed, are slippery, and you might be drowned even now, when we are no longer in danger."

"Do you s'pose I'm goin' to stay on this wreck all night?" Master Seabury cried, struggling frantically to free himself.

"But this is the safest and most comfortable place, Thomas dear. There is no longer any fear the vessel will be destroyed, for the waves hardly touch her. Stay with me, like a good boy, and when it is light we'll climb up on that mountain."

"But the water will come back. It only runs down just so far, and then rises again."

"Captain Hiram told us it was twelve hours from one high tide to another, and surely it will be morning before then."

"It seems as though we had been here two or three nights."

"But you know we haven't, Thomas dear. Perhaps it isn't even twelve o'clock yet. We must be patient and wait. Don't you know what Captain Hiram said about patience?"

"I don't want to hear that old pirate's name!" Master Seabury exclaimed; and now that his terror had subsided in a slight degree he was capable of displaying anger. "If it hadn't been for his miserable vessel, and your foolishness in wanting to go for a sail, we'd be home with mother now."

"Why, I am sure, dear, you were glad to go when he offered to take us out in the boat."

"I'd rather done something else. It was only 'cause you wanted to go."

"Don't you think, Thomas dear, it would be better if you should sit down here and feel thankful because our lives have been saved? Remember how much danger we have been in, and how secure we are now. First, there was the steamer, when it seemed certain she would run over us. Then came the wind, and our being wrecked; but yet through it all God has let us come to this place where we are safe."

"You'd better wait and find out whether we

get off or not before you commence being so mighty thankful."

Ellen gave no heed to this ill-tempered remark, but set about doing something to make amends for her neglect of Samuel Abner.

The water had partially run out of the cuddy as the tide receded, and she had but little difficulty in getting sufficient food to satisfy his hunger.

It was impossible to change their drenched clothing, and the gentle night wind was chilling. To pace to and fro on the inclined deck was not an easy matter, but it afforded such exercise as kept her comparatively warm; and little Ellen trudged to and fro, singing to the baby which she carried in her arms, until Thomas Hardy said irritably, —

"I wish you would stop climbin' up an' down! What good does that do?"

"It keeps me warm. My clothes are very wet."

"So are mine; but I don't make so much fuss about it."

"You ought to, or you'll get cold."

"I'd better do that than be drowned."

"For mother's sake it is your duty to do what you can to keep yourself from being sick."

"She ought to feel glad I ain't dead."

"Now you are talking foolishly again, Thomas Hardy, and I won't listen to it. It is wicked to be so discontented and peevish after we have had such a narrow escape."

Then, perhaps to prevent any reply, little Ellen began to coax the baby into dreamland by singing; and by the time her limbs were so tired that it seemed impossible to continue the exercise, Samuel Abner was being entertained by the dream-elves, regardless of his wet clothing and forlorn condition.

Ellen crouched against the lee-rail with the representative of the Jones family in her arms, and kindly sleep came to her eyelids at brief intervals during the night, while Master Seabury slumbered peacefully all the while.

When day finally dawned the waves had begun creeping toward the rock once more, and Ellen understood that they must quit the shattered vessel for a refuge on the cliff.

Arousing Thomas Hardy, she explained why an immediate move should be made; and he, grumbling as usual, consented to her proposition that they try to make their way up the face of the rock.

It was beyond their power to ascend the ledge to its summit, but they succeeded in gaining a point where it was not probable the water would

reach them, and Ellen made Samuel Abner as comfortable as was possible under the circumstances, after which she would have turned her attention to Thomas Hardy, but that he peevishly rejected her proffered assistance.

"I'll sit right where I am till I die, and that's what's going to happen to all of us," he said irritably.

"Captain Hiram will be certain to come now that it is light, and we may as well be patient as to grumble. Will you go down to the vessel for some food, or shall I?"

"Why didn't you bring it with you, and not have to climb up here twice?"

"Because I had the baby in my arms and couldn't, Thomas dear."

"Well, it's your fault we didn't bring it, and you can go after it."

"Will you take care of Samuel Abner while I'm gone?"

"I'll see he don't tumble off the rocks, and that's all I will do. I didn't fetch him into this scrape, so I sha'n't take care of him."

Little Ellen clambered slowly down the cliff and on board the wreck, returning shortly afterward with such provisions as had not been spoiled by the salt water.

Thomas Hardy partook of the fruits of his sister's labor without the slightest compunction, paying no attention as to whether she and Samuel Abner had a full share.

Ellen looked at him curiously.

"Now what's the matter with you?" he asked surlily.

"Nothing. I was only thinking that the dangers we have passed through have taught me a lesson."

"So they have me."

"What is it?"

"Not to go out sailing with that old pirate again."

"But he wasn't to blame for anything that has happened, Thomas dear. You know as well as I do that the Island Queen wouldn't have been wrecked but for your meddling with the rope which was tied to the anchor."

"That's right! Pick on me same's you always do, an' perhaps it'll make you feel better!"

"I'm not picking on you, Thomas Hardy. You are fretful and ungrateful."

"Why shouldn't I be?"

"If you don't know by this time, I'm afraid I can't explain; but I'm glad now that I haven't a middle name. I *did* think that was what

children needed, but perhaps it doesn't make any difference."

"I don't know what you're driving at, but by the way you talk anybody'd think I hadn't lifted a finger since we got adrift."

"Perhaps we'd better not say anything more now, for it seems wicked to be almost quarrelling at such a time;" and with a little sigh Ellen turned her attention to the care of Samuel Abner.

During an hour Thomas Hardy alternately scolded because Captain Hiram had dared ask him to take a sail, and grumbled at his mother's delay in sending some one to their assistance; while little Ellen soothed the baby, bathed the wound on his cheek, and otherwise looked after his comfort regardless of her own.

Neither of the children had paid any attention to a tiny white sail on the water which was swiftly approaching their place of refuge, and not until it was within a quarter of a mile did Ellen espy it.

"O Thomas! Somebody is coming after us, and now all our troubles are over!"

"Perhaps they are, and perhaps they ain't."

In this case Ellen was correct; for fifteen minutes later Captain Hiram's cheery hail was

heard; and while Thomas Hardy obstinately remained silent, Ellen answered it cheerfully and cried, —

“Here we are, Captain Hiram! Do you know if mother worried very much about us?”

“I don’t allow she did, seein’s I ain’t been back to Oldhaven yet; an’ Maria Littlefield would tell her Cap’en Hiram Stubbs was sailorman enough to take care of a couple of children what he’d invited out for a cruise, even though he hasn’t done it over an’ above well; so I allow your mother ain’t been in much of a stew. It looks as though the Island Queen had made her last voyage, don’t it?”

“I am afraid she’s ruined, Captain Hiram; and it’s all our fault.”

“Not yours, little Ellen, I’ll be bound. An’ when it comes to the fact that all of you are alive, an’ none the worse for wear, we won’t say a word about the wreckin’ of the sloop, even though she was the trimmest that ever sailed out of Oldhaven.”

“Why didn’t you come after us before?” Master Seabury asked.

“Now look here, lad; you don’t want to wear any more sulks where I am! I allow you’ve jest about worn your sister out with ’em since last

night; an' after what's happened I sha'n't have the patience to put up with cranky talk."

"I suppose you are going to blame onto us all that happened."

"I don't count on doin' anything of that kind, lad; for I know what's been done, jest the same as if I'd been on board all the time, except when it comes to the wreckin'. The cable wasn't let go in any sich deep water but that I could read the whole story from it."

"It slipped off the stick."

"The bowline *I* made never slipped, lad. It was after you had untied it, an' tried to put it on agin, that it went over. Then the current took you out of the cove, an' you didn't know enough to furl the canvas when the wind came up. You've been mighty nigh death, my boy; an' if anything had happened you'd have been answerable for the lives of your sister an' young Jones. If you'll allers keep in mind that it was your wilfulness that brought you an' the Island Queen to this pass, it may work some good in the future."

"I don't think Thomas Hardy will ever do anything of the kind again, Captain Hiram; and perhaps mother'll pay for the vessel we have ruined."

"I don't ask for anything like that, little

Ellen, seein's how I'm able to get me a new one whenever I want it; an' I sha'n't take the loss of the Island Queen to heart if Thomas Hardy has learned the lesson what has been read out for him since last night."

"I hope he has, sir."

"So do I, little Ellen; but I doubt it. Howsomever, there's no great good can come of my sittin' here lecturin' you young people; for I allow you need to get back to Maria Littlefield's. This isn't a very fine craft to take you aboard of, but she's a deal better'n what's left of the Island Queen; and the sooner you scramble down, the quicker we'll be on our way to Oldhaven."

"How did you get another vessel so soon?" Ellen asked.

"This ain't what you might rightly call a vessel, little woman. It's nothing more nor less than a dory with a leg-o'-mutton sail; but she'll take us back to the Haven all right, an' that's as much as we have reason to expect. Hubbard owns her; an' I'm bound to get her to him before night, if possible, for she's the only craft he's got."

Thomas Hardy had already clambered down from the cliff, and was about to take his seat in the boat when Captain Hiram stopped him.

“See here, lad ! you ain’t the most important member of this party, by a long shot; an’ I don’t allow to give you a seat in the stern-sheets. That belongs to your sister and young Jones ; so you’ll wait till they’re aboard.”

Then the old man would have ascended the cliff to assist little Ellen, but that she protested against anything of the kind, and scrambled down as best she could with Samuel Abner in her arms.

Not until an hour after noon did the rescued and rescuer sail into Oldhaven harbor ; and during all the voyage Thomas Hardy had not spoken to his companions.

Ellen would have talked with him but that Captain Hiram motioned her to remain silent ; for he knew the boy would have no better opportunity to review the events of the previous twenty-four hours than at this time. And it is quite probable that out of the fearsome night came something of advantage to Master Seabury ; for when the dory’s bow grated on the sands of Oldhaven harbor, he leaped out of the boat, pulled her as far up on the shore as his strength would admit ; after which he took Samuel Abner from Ellen’s arms, carrying him carefully to the edge of the dusty road.

“Now, little Ellen, will you give me one more

kiss? An' then I'll put off for Dollar Island agin."

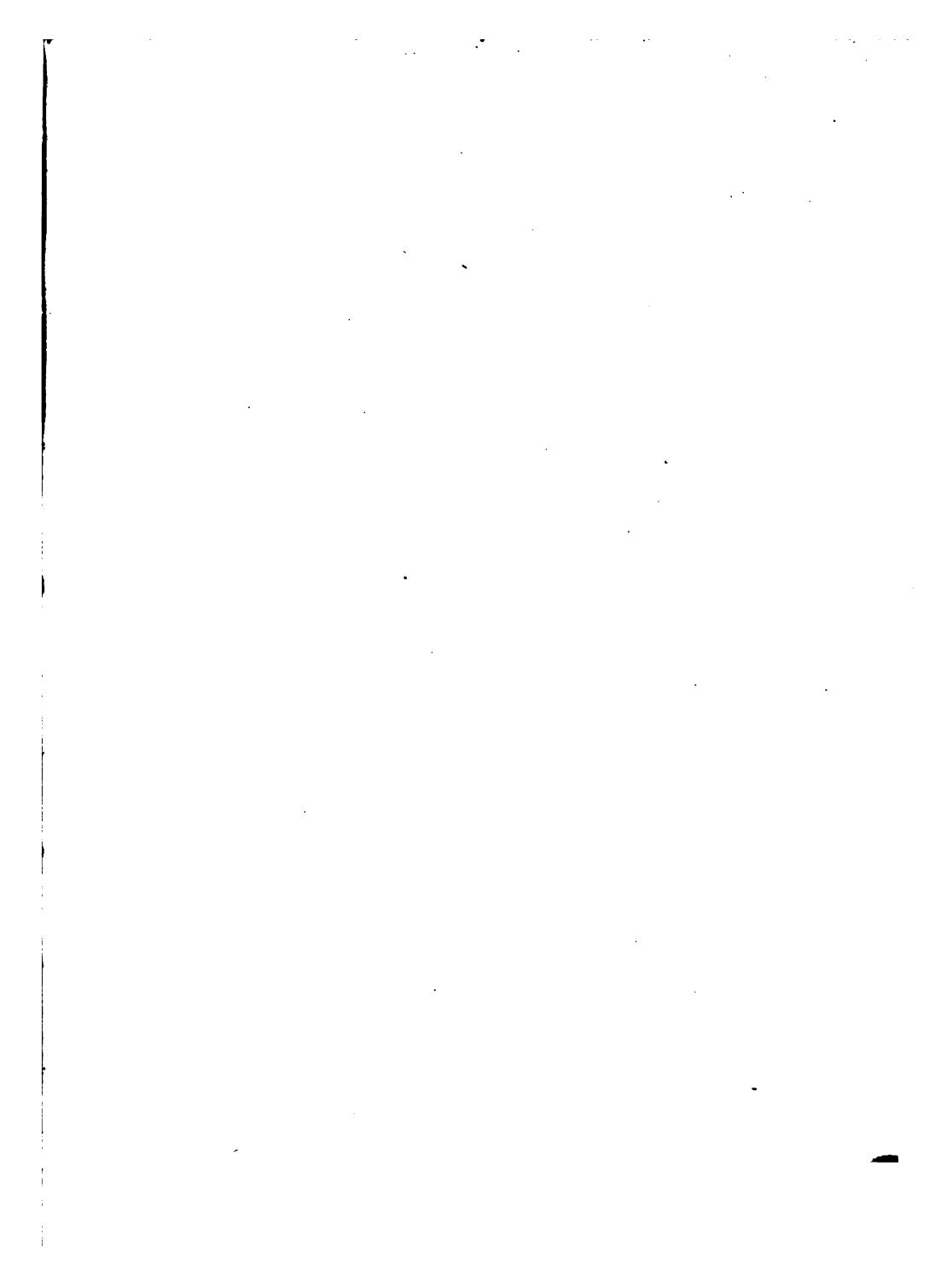
"But surely I shall see you before we leave Oldhaven, Captain Hiram?"

"Yes, indeed, little woman! It wasn't a good-by kiss I wanted, but something in the nature of a thanksgivin' that it was permitted you should come safely through the dangers of last night. It would have 'most broken my heart, child, if anything had happened to you; for I'm countin' on enjoyin' a good bit of your company the balance of this summer, an' on havin' you here when the new sloop is launched."

"Sha'n't you try to save the Island Queen, Captain Hiram?"

"It won't pay, deary. I'll strip her of her riggin' an' sich truck as can be worked over; but her hull is clean gone. I allow to leave her on the Needles as long as the waves will let her stay, to show to the young people of Oldhaven what wilfulness and ignorance can accomplish without any very great effort."

THE END.



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